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Methodological issues under the Convention

**Work programme on the revision of the guidelines for the review of
biennial reports and national communications, including national
inventory reviews, for developed country Parties**

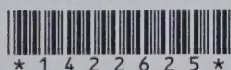
Report on the second technical workshop on the draft revised guidelines for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention

Note by the secretariat

Summary

This document provides a summary of the discussions held during the second technical workshop on the revision of the “Guidelines for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention”. The workshop, co-chaired by Mr. Andrew Marquard (South Africa) and Ms. Riitta Pipatti (Finland) and held from 4 to 6 November 2014 in Bonn, Germany, was organized under a work programme of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA). This report on the workshop, together with the draft revised guidelines for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.21, which reflect the discussions held at the workshop, is to be forwarded to SBSTA 41 for consideration under the relevant agenda item.

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I. Introduction

A. Mandate

1. The Conference of the Parties (COP), by decision 1/CP.16, paragraph 46, decided on a work programme, building on existing reporting and review guidelines, processes and experiences, covering the revision of the guidelines for the review of national communications (NCs), including biennial reports (BRs), annual greenhouse gas (GHG) inventories and national inventory systems. By decision 2/CP.17, paragraph 28, it decided to establish a relevant work programme under the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA).

2. SBSTA 36 initiated¹ its consideration of the work programme, including the organization of technical workshops. SBSTA 37 agreed² on the elements and timeline of the work programme on the revision of the guidelines for the review of BRs and NCs, including national inventory reviews, for developed country Parties.³ At the same session, the SBSTA requested⁴ the secretariat to organize a workshop in the first half of 2014 to continue discussions on the “Guidelines for the technical review of greenhouse gas inventories from Parties included in Annex I to the Convention”,⁵ which will be an update of the guidelines contained in the annex to decision 19/CP.8 (hereinafter referred to as the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines).

3. At SBSTA 39, Parties were invited to submit to the secretariat detailed views on the structure, outline, key elements, including the purpose and scope of the review, timing and reporting, and content of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines. At the same session, the SBSTA agreed that, in their consideration of the revision of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, Parties should take into account experience with the review of information submitted by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention (Annex I Parties) and the need to have a cost-effective, efficient and practical review process that does not impose an excessive burden on Parties, experts or the secretariat. SBSTA 39 requested the secretariat to prepare a synthesis report⁶ on the aforementioned views and a draft of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines,⁷ on the basis of the aforementioned submissions,⁸ as inputs to the workshop referred to in paragraph 2 above.⁹

4. The COP, by decision 23/CP.19, adopted the “Guidelines for the technical review of information reported under the Convention related to greenhouse gas inventories, biennial reports and national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention”. The annex to that decision contains a placeholder for the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, to be further discussed at SBSTA 40 and SBSTA 41, with a view to adopting a decision thereon at COP 20.¹⁰

¹ FCCC/SBSTA/2012/2, paragraph 68.

² FCCC/SBSTA/2012/5, paragraph 77.

³ The work programme, with specific timelines and activities for 2013 and 2014, is contained in annex I to document FCCC/SBSTA/2012/5.

⁴ FCCC/SBSTA/2012/5, paragraphs 80 and 81.

⁵ The report on the workshop is contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.9.

⁶ FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.3.

⁷ FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.4, annex.

⁸ The submissions received are available at <<http://unfccc.int/5901>>.

⁹ FCCC/SBSTA/2013/5, paragraphs 68 and 69.

¹⁰ FCCC/SBSTA/2013/3, paragraph 88(b), and FCCC/SBSTA/2014/2, paragraphs 109–111.

5. SBSTA 40 continued its discussions on the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines and invited Parties to submit to the secretariat, by 15 July 2014, further views on and suggestions for textual modifications to specific paragraphs of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines and requested the secretariat to make the submissions available on the UNFCCC website.¹¹

6. In addition, SBSTA 40 reiterated the need for another technical workshop under the work programme referred to in paragraph 1 above in the second half of 2014.¹² It requested the secretariat to prepare an updated draft of the revised guidelines, with tracked changes, on the basis of the discussions that took place at SBSTA 40 and the submissions from Parties referred to in paragraph 5 above, to serve as the input to the aforementioned technical workshop.^{13, 14} The workshop was held from 4 to 6 November 2014 in Bonn, Germany.

7. Furthermore, SBSTA 40 requested the secretariat to prepare a further updated draft of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, with tracked changes, on the basis of the updated draft guidelines referred to in paragraph 6 above and the discussions that took place during the workshop referred to in the same paragraph.¹⁵ In accordance with the conclusions of SBSTA 40, the output of the discussions on the revision of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines at SBSTA 40, with the additions resulting from the workshop and the submissions from Parties in tracked changes, will serve as initial input, inter alia, to the discussions at SBSTA 41.¹⁶

B. Scope of the note

8. This document covers the proceedings of, and discussions held during, the technical workshop on the revision of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines (hereinafter referred to as the workshop), which was held under the work programme referred to in paragraph 1 above. The participants in the workshop produced a draft of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, which, together with the guidelines adopted by decision 23/CP.19 referred to in paragraph 4 above, is contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.21.

C. Possible action by the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice

9. SBSTA 41 may wish to take into account this workshop report, the views submitted by Parties referred to in paragraph 5 above and the draft of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines referred to in paragraph 7 above in advancing its work on the revision of said guidelines.

¹¹ FCCC/SBSTA/2014/2, paragraph 112.

¹² FCCC/SBSTA/2014/2, paragraph 114.

¹³ FCCC/SBSTA/2014/2, paragraph 113.

¹⁴ The updated draft of the revised guidelines is contained in the annex to document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.14.

¹⁵ The further updated draft of the revised guidelines is contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.21.

¹⁶ FCCC/SBSTA/2014/2, paragraph 114.

II. Proceedings of the workshop

10. The workshop, organized by the secretariat under the guidance of the Chair of the SBSTA, Mr. Emmanuel Dlamini, was held in Bonn, Germany, from 4 to 6 November 2014. Sixty-four participants representing 56 Parties (22 Annex I Parties and 34 Parties not included in Annex I to the Convention) attended the workshop. Although the Chair of the SBSTA was unable to attend the workshop personally owing to competing commitments, a statement was read on his behalf to open the workshop. At the request of the Chair, the workshop was co-facilitated by Mr. Andrew Marquard (South Africa) and Ms. Riitta Pipatti (Finland).

11. The aim of the workshop was to allow further discussion on outstanding issues and to advance the text of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines before SBSTA 41,¹⁷ in order to help SBSTA 41 to complete the work on those guidelines and to forward a draft decision thereon for adoption at COP 20, in accordance with the work programme adopted at SBSTA 37. The adoption of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines at COP 20 is critical to enable Parties, review experts and the secretariat to implement the reviews of the GHG inventories submitted by Annex I Parties by 15 April 2015.

12. Following the opening of the workshop on behalf of the Chair of the SBSTA, when the mandate and objectives of the workshop were presented, a presentation made by representatives of the secretariat briefed the workshop participants on the current status of the work programme referred to in paragraph 11 above and the organization of the work.¹⁸ Then, the key elements of the submissions received in response to the invitation of the SBSTA referred to in paragraph 5 above were presented. The next presentation, made by the secretariat, introduced the draft revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines referred to in paragraph 6 above.

13. Following the presentations referred to in paragraph 12 above and the subsequent exchanges of views, the workshop participants, guided by the co-facilitators, started discussions on the text of the guidelines, using the draft revised guidelines referred to in paragraph 6 above as a starting point. In the discussions, the participants clarified their views and the rationale behind them, sought possible directions for a convergence of views and identified issues that need to be further considered at SBSTA 41.

14. In the final session of the workshop, the co-facilitators summarized the discussions that had taken place over the three days of the workshop and noted that the draft UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines as revised at the workshop could serve as a basis for further discussion at SBSTA 41. The draft guidelines have been published on the UNFCCC website in accordance with the relevant mandate of the SBSTA.¹⁹ In addition, some participants noted that it would be beneficial for the SBSTA to see two additional working versions of the guidelines: a version of the document with all track changes accepted (to provide a snapshot of the current state of the document); and a version that provides a clean version of the text resulting from SBSTA 40, with only the suggested changes made at the workshop, highlighted in tracked changes. The co-facilitators of the workshop requested that the secretariat prepare and make such versions available.²⁰

¹⁷ FCCC/SBSTA/2014/2, paragraph 114.

¹⁸ The presentations made at the workshop are available at <<http://unfccc.int/8479>>.

¹⁹ They are contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.21.

²⁰ The versions are available at <<http://unfccc.int/8479>>.

15. Chapter III below summarizes the main points made during the technical discussions at the workshop and reflected in the text of the draft revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines.²¹

16. All documentation relating to the workshop, such as the background documents, the workshop agenda, the list of participants and the presentations made by the secretariat and by a Party, are available on the UNFCCC website.²²

III. Summary of discussions

A. Enhancing the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of reviews

17. All workshop participants acknowledged the importance of continued annual reviews of GHG inventories submitted by Annex I Parties and, within that framework, discussed some examples of potential improvements to the process that would not jeopardize the quality and robustness of the reviews but would contribute to the cost-efficiency of the process, for example:

(a) Many participants supported consolidating the current stages 1 and 2 of the annual review cycle into a single set of checks (see para. 27 below);

(b) Some participants supported changing the frequency of stage 3 of the review (the review of individual annual inventories through centralized, in-country or desk reviews) to biennial (see para. 19(c) below);

(c) Some participants supported the periodic use of the desk review, with a more limited scope, while some participants indicated that the focus of all reviews should be the same, regardless of the format, as is currently the case (see para. 31 below);

(d) The views of the participants began to converge on improvements to the annual review report, including the use of more tables and limiting its length (see para. 38 below).

B. Stages of the review of greenhouse gas inventories of Annex I Parties

18. The COP, by decision 19/CP.8, established the general approach to the review of Annex I Parties' GHG inventories. They are reviewed on an annual basis, with the review consisting of the following three stages:²³

(a) Initial check of annual inventories (stage 1);

(b) Synthesis and assessment of annual inventories (parts I and II) (stage 2);

(c) Review of individual annual inventories (stage 3).

19. The following options were put forward at the workshop with regard to the review process:

(a) To continue with the existing process;

²¹ As footnote 15 above.

²² <<http://unfccc.int/8479>>.

²³ Paragraph 3 of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, contained in document FCCC/CP/2002/8.

(b) To have two stages: standardized checks or initial assessment (as no agreement was reached among the participants on the name for this stage, the generic term of “standardized checks” is used in this document) and individual inventory reviews;

(c) To maintain annually stages 1 and 2, either as distinct phases or a single phase, but change to biennial the frequency of stage 3. The workshop participants did not undertake extensive discussion on the frequency of the last stage of the review and, recognizing that not a lot of progress could be made on the issue in a workshop setting, maintained the two options.

20. The views of many of the workshop participants began to converge on having a single set of standardized checks, to be carried out by the secretariat, but with two distinct reports being prepared, similar to the annual status report and part II of the synthesis and assessment report currently produced (see para. 36 below).

C. Operational approaches to the individual inventory review: desk, centralized and in-country reviews

21. The COP, by decision 19/CP.8, provided three operational approaches for stage 3 of the technical review referred to in paragraph 18(c) above, namely desk reviews, centralized reviews and in-country reviews.²⁴ The workshop participants noted that, currently, every year approximately three quarters of Parties are subject to a centralized review and the remaining Parties are visited for an in-country review. Desk reviews are, at present, rarely used.

22. In the context of the revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, the following options regarding the use of desk reviews were discussed by the workshop participants:

(a) Continuing the existing operational approaches, including the use of desk reviews only as a contingency to be considered by the secretariat when difficulties or resource limitations are encountered;

(b) Including desk reviews in the planning (i.e. not using them only as a contingency).

23. Broadly, the workshop participants agreed that the revised guidelines can continue to include all three operational approaches for the last stage of the review.

24. Views differed on: the scope of the last stage of the review (see para. 31 below); the frequency of the in-country review (every four, five or eight years); and whether the last stage of the review should take place annually or biennially.

25. The workshop participants noted that, in practice, there may be a relationship between the frequency of the last stage of the review of GHG inventories (annual versus biennial), the format of the review (desk, centralized or in-country) and the emphasis placed on a given format in a given year (e.g. half of the Parties subject to desk reviews versus no desk reviews).

D. Scope and focus of the different stages of the review

26. The discussion regarding the scope of the different stages of the review focused on elaborating the standardized checks to be carried out by the secretariat prior to the

²⁴ Paragraph 18 of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, contained in document FCCC/CP/2002/8.

individual inventory review as well as the tasks of the expert review team (ERT) conducting the individual inventory review.

27. Many workshop participants noted that the scope of the checks, whether carried out in two separate stages or as a single set of standardized checks, were similar, and so they agreed to work through editing just one option. While recognizing that some still preferred to have separate stages 1 and 2 (option 1), the workshop participants agreed to reflect the proposed edits to the scope of such checks in the option on standardized checks (option 2) of the draft revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines.

28. The workshop participants indicated that the scope of the checks to be undertaken could stay broadly the same as set out in decision 19/CP.8, and discussed removing the checks that may be unnecessary or not applicable anymore (e.g. because of the checks that are implemented automatically in the CRF Reporter, such as the use of correct values for global warming potentials, the presentation of hydrofluorocarbons and perfluorocarbons by individual chemical species, and the implementation of key category analysis). Some participants noted that, although the CRF Reporter may carry out specific checks, there could still be value in such checks also being included among the standardized checks.

29. The participants discussed, but did not agree on, whether the secretariat should continue to include comparisons with external data sources in the standardized checks and, if so, which data sources are relevant and whether they should be reviewed and updated by the lead reviewers.

30. The workshop participants agreed that the review of individual inventories should focus on: key categories; areas of the inventory in relation to which issues have been identified and recommendations made during previous reviews; and categories that have an impact on the level of and/or trend in the total national emissions and removals.

31. The participants also discussed, but did not agree on, whether the desk review (as an operational approach) would have a different focus from the two other operational approaches (centralized review and in-country review), with the desk review being of limited focus and focusing mainly on the findings of the previous stage(s) of the review, an analysis of significant recalculations and a review of whether, and if so how, recommendations made in previous review reports have been implemented. Some participants noted that the ultimate implementation of the desk review (e.g. the frequency of its use) is related to the scope of the desk review and how similar, or dissimilar, it is to a centralized or in-country review.

32. The participants further discussed, but did not agree on, two possible types of notifications to the Party at the end of the review week or period that are not currently provided for in the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines. Firstly, some participants proposed that the ERT should inform the Party under review at the end of the "period at which the individual review is performed" of whether there are any significant potential issues related to mandatory requirements in the "Guidelines for the preparation of national communications by Parties included in Annex I to the Convention, Part I: UNFCCC reporting guidelines on annual greenhouse gas inventories" (including potential overestimations or underestimations). They discussed whether such a process should be mandatory or voluntary and, if voluntary, whether Parties would take the opportunity to submit revised emission estimates.

33. The second possible notification discussed was the ERT informing the Party, at the end of the review week, of the provisional main findings. Most participants saw the value of sending such a list to the Party. Discussion focused on whether the list of preliminary main findings should be exhaustive or include only the main issues and whether all issues listed in the preliminary main findings should end up in the final annual review report.

E. Timing of the review stages

34. There was limited discussion at the workshop on the timing of the different stages of the review and no substantive textual modifications were made in that regard. Several participants agreed that there should be a single set of standardized checks, resulting in two different reports: one public and one for the Party (see para. 36 below). There was general discussion about whether the secretariat is able to meet the timelines currently set out in the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines²⁵ for the review stages (seven weeks for the annual status report and seven weeks prior to the review week for part II of the synthesis and assessment report) and whether it would be feasible for the secretariat to conduct all standardized checks within eight weeks.

35. With regard to the timing of the completion of the reports for the individual review stage, many participants acknowledged that timing is important and that the agreed revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines should lead to an increase in the efficiency of the process, such that the reports are made available in a timely manner.

F. Reporting

36. The workshop participants discussed the option of retaining two reports containing the results of the standardized checks. The first report would be similar to the current annual status report (although the name may be different) and would be made publicly available. The second report would be similar to part II of the synthesis and assessment report (again the name may or may not change) and would be available only to the Party and reflect the outcome of the standardized checks that the secretariat would undertake.

37. Many workshop participants noted that part I of the synthesis and assessment report, produced by the secretariat, may no longer be needed as a published report. It was also noted that much of the data contained therein are already available on the UNFCCC website via the GHG Data Interface.²⁶

38. In addition, the participants discussed possible additional recommendations related to the structure and content of the review reports. They broadly agreed that the annual review report should be as concise as possible, not exceeding 30 pages. They suggested that, in order to make the report more concise, information should be presented in tables whenever possible, and that information already publicly available should not be extensively duplicated in the report.

IV. Outcome of the workshop

39. The workshop participants produced the draft revised UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines contained in document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.21, which will be forwarded to SBSTA 41. The draft text, prepared on the basis of document FCCC/SBSTA/2014/INF.14, clearly shows the additions and deletions of text suggested by the participants during the technical discussions at the workshop.

²⁵ Paragraphs 9, 16 and 41 of the UNFCCC Annex I inventory review guidelines, contained in document FCCC/CP/2002/8.

²⁶ <http://unfccc.int/ghg_data/items/3800.php>.

